

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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Celebrate Black History Month in Jersey City Events Feature Dance, Art, Spoken Word and Oratory Contest

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy, the Jersey City Municipal Council and the Division of Cultural Affairs have prepared a series of events to commemorate **Black History Month** in Jersey City.

“February is Black History Month and is a time to celebrate the spirit of each generation of African Americans and pay tribute to their many achievements,” said **Mayor Healy**. “The greatness of our city lies within the rich diversity of our people. The contributions of the African-American community play a vital role in the success of our economic, social and cultural progress in Jersey City.”

To kick off this month-long celebration, a flag raising ceremony was held last week, as city officials and community members raised the Black Liberation Flag over City Hall.

An annual event that not only educates our youth on the role the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. played in the Civil Rights Movement, but also teaches them how to be public speakers, is the **MLK Oratory Contest**. The contestants, who are separated into two grade categories – the grade 3 to 5 group and the grade 6 to 8 group – must memorize and present an original work of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., which is judged by representatives of the business community.

Now in its 13th year, the MLK Oratory contest is sponsored by the City of Jersey City and the Bank of America. Public, private and charter schools across the city are notified of the contest, and asked to hold an internal selection process in which they send two students to compete in each grade category. **Grades 3-5 will compete on Wednesday, February 13, 2008, while grades 6-8 will compete on February 15, 2008. Both age groups will compete in the Finals competition to be held on February 21, 2008.** All rounds take place at the Liberty Science Center from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

The Jersey City Division of Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with the Jersey City Afro American Historical Museum, will present "**Drum Talk**", a celebration of the contributions of Africans and African-Americans through the history of the rhythm of the drums.

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Drum Talk will be held from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 27, 2008 at Landmark Loew's Theatre in Journal Square. The program will feature African Master Drummer YaYa Kamate from the Ivory Coast, Melvin Dean on Steel Pan, legendary jazz drummer Don Carter, a pop - Hip Hop performance, as well as lyrical performances by Jersey City students. Dujauana Sharese, a Spoken Word Artist will also perform as will the Gothic Knights Steppers from NJCU. Muhammed Bilal will perform with his students on violin, with music written and composed by Bilal.

Also, there will be an opening reception for the **Black History Month Group Exhibition from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, February 7, 2008 at City Hall, 280 Grove Street.** The reception is free and open to the public and is handicap accessible. Refreshments will be served.

The show, which is curated by City Hall Art Curator Greg Brickey, will run through the end of this month. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information on Black History Month events, contact the Division of Cultural Affairs at 201-547-6921.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-686-7244.

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